

**USAID Country Profile: Belarus****October 2003**

**Capital:** Minsk  
**Population:** 10 million (2000)  
**GDP(current US\$):** 11,633 million (2001)  
**Population below national poverty line** 28.9%  
**GDP per capita (current US\$):** 1,174 (2001)  
**GDP per capita (purchasing power parity):** \$8,200  
**Religion:** Eastern Orthodox 80%, (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim) 20%  
**Language Usage:** Russian and Belarusian  
**President:** Alexander Lukashenko  
**Prime Minister:** Gennady Novitsky  
**Ambassador to US:** Valeriy Tsepka



**National Interest:** The U.S. has a vital national interest in a prosperous, free, and peaceful Europe which must include a stable, democratic, and market-oriented Belarus. After the first round of European Union integration, the EU will become contiguous with Belarus, leaving it potentially vulnerable to political and economic instability across the border. The US foreign policy priorities in Belarus are to help foster a political and economic environment which is more democratic and in harmony with the region, through its work to strengthen civil society, political process, and the independent media.

**OVERVIEW OF USAID'S FOCUS IN BELARUS**  
FY03: Total FSA - \$9.5million, USAID Total - \$3.9million

**Civil Society Organizations (FY03 \$1.8 million, 46%):**

USAID will advance its community initiative program, aimed at involving citizens in democratic decision making. Two approaches will be used for implementation of the program: support to "capacity-related" community initiatives and capacity building for NGOs in those communities. Ten sites will be selected for training in democratic governance, community appraisal, and support in the formation of representative community project boards. USAID technical assistance and grants will provide these communities with the resources to promote a greater flow of information on issues which are important to and identified by the citizens.

**Support for Political Parties (FY03 \$1million, 26%):**

USAID will focus on the following areas for the pro-democracy party training, technical assistance, and cross-border exchanges: internal governance practices, effectiveness of strategic planning and operations, membership recruitment and retention, and message formulation. The latter involves building party public relations and media communications skills, and improving the capacity for productive use of public opinion research. These activities will assist the national and regional political party network to identify issues resonating with the people and build their platforms around them. A civic organization will be established that conducts public awareness campaigns to educate Belarusians about their constitutional rights and democratic electoral processes.

**Support to Independent Media (FY03 \$.7million 18%):**

USAID's assistance will improve the professional skills of non-state media owners and professionals, including publishers, accountants and journalists; strengthen the legal and financial status of independent media; and increase journalists' capacity to provide the public with objective, fact-based, and useful information. USAID will work with independent print and electronic media, the latter including private regional TV and radio stations. The technical assistance will include a wide range of expert services: journalism and management training, legal defense, on-site business consultations, and free-of-charge service provision (e.g., photo archive, Internet access, specialized software development and transfer, etc.)

**Increased Legal Defense Capacity (FY 03 \$.3million 8%)**

USAID plans to extend the current program promoting human rights and the rule of law by continuing to train local lawyers, activists, the free trade unions, NGOs and the citizenry to advocate for greater respect by Belarusian authorities. Continued support will be provided to the network of Legal Advice Centers.

USAID/Ukraine: Chris Crowley, Regional Director (011-380-44-462-5678), 19 Nizhniy Val, Kyiv 04071, Ukraine  
USAID/Belarus Country Coordinator in Minsk, Christine Sheckler, (375-29-650-2202)  
USAID/Washington: Bob Wallin (202-712-0141) & Yvette N. Malcioln (202-712-4652), Belarus Desk  
USAID/Belarus website: <http://www.usaid.kiev.ua>